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Department of Homeland Security
before the House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management
Hearing: “On the Border and in the Line of Fire: U.S. Law Enforcement, Homeland
Security and Drug Cartel Violence”**

Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in securing the Southwest border. DHS is committed to protecting our nation’s borders from the illegal entry of people, weapons, drugs and contraband, and is continuing to work with our Mexican counterparts to address the violence and criminal activities occurring in Mexico and guard against spillover effects into the United States.

As Director of the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement (CNE), I serve as the primary advisor to the Secretary on counterdrug issues, working closely with the Department’s components and the interagency to ensure that our counterdrug efforts are well coordinated and support the Secretary’s priorities. CNE works with components to identify and resolve issues impacting the DHS counternarcotics mission, while also supporting the goals identified in the President’s *National Drug Control Strategy*.

On behalf of the Secretary, I also serve as an executive agent for the development and implementation of the Administration’s *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy*, which is produced by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. This strategy is a comprehensive plan that identifies concrete joint actions to improve intelligence and information sharing, enhances interdiction at and between U.S. ports of entry, and provides investigators and prosecutors with the resources and tools necessary to combat transnational criminal organizations.

Over the past two years, DHS has deployed historic levels of personnel, technology, and resources to the Southwest border. Today, the Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its 87-year history, having more than doubled the number of agents from approximately 10,000 in 2004 to more than 20,700 today. Under the Southwest Border Initiative launched in March 2009, DHS has doubled the number of personnel assigned to Border Enforcement Security Task Forces; increased the number of intelligence analysts focused on cartel violence; quintupled deployments of Border Liaison Officers to work with their Mexican counterparts; begun screening 100 percent of southbound rail shipments for illegal weapons, drugs, and cash; and expanded unmanned aircraft system coverage to the entire Southwest border.

With the aid of \$600 million from the border security supplemental requested by the Administration and passed by Congress in 2010, we have continued to add more technology, manpower and infrastructure to the border. These resources include 1,000 additional Border Patrol Agents; 250 new U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at our ports of entry; 250 new U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents focused on transnational

crime; improving our tactical communications systems; adding two new forward operating bases to improve coordination of border security activities; and additional CBP unmanned aircraft systems.

Further, President Obama authorized the temporary deployment of up to 1,200 National Guard personnel to contribute additional capabilities and capacity to assist law enforcement agencies as a bridge to longer-term enhancements in the efforts to target illicit networks' smuggling of people, drugs, illegal weapons, money, and the violence associated with these illegal activities. That support has allowed us to bridge an operational gap and hire additional agents to support the Southwest Border, as well as field additional technology and communications capabilities that Congress so generously provided. The Departments of Defense and Homeland Security agreed to equally fund this support; however, Congress did not approve DHS' reprogramming requests. Consequently, the Department of Defense has been funding the full cost of this National Guard support.

Additionally, to support state and local law enforcement jurisdictions along the border, we directed more than \$123 million in Operation Stonegarden funds in 2009 and 2010 to Southwest border states to pay for overtime and other border-related expenses.

In partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Department of Defense, we also have achieved initial operational capability for the new Border Intelligence Fusion Section integrated into the DEA-led El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). This new section will provide a comprehensive Southwest Border Common Intelligence picture, as well as real-time operational intelligence, to our law enforcement partners in the region – further streamlining and enhancing our operations. And we are continuing to work with Mexico to develop an interoperable, cross-border communications network that will improve our ability to coordinate law enforcement and public safety issues.

Taken as a whole, the additional manpower, technology and resources directed at securing the region represent the most serious and sustained effort to secure our border in our nation's history. Such efforts were undertaken with the support of Congress and were well coordinated within the interagency. While our work is not done, every key metric shows that these border security efforts are producing significant results. Border Patrol apprehensions – a key indicator of illegal immigration – have decreased 36 percent in the past two years, and are less than one third of what they were at their peak. Seizures of drugs, weapons and currency have increased across the board. And violent crime in border communities has remained flat or fallen in the past decade – in fact, studies and statistics have shown that some of the safest cities and communities in America are along the border.

At the same time, challenges remain, and we must continue to build upon the progress we have made. We remain deeply concerned about the drug cartel violence taking place in Mexico. We know that these drug organizations are seeking to undermine the rule of law in Northern Mexico, and we must vigorously guard against potential spillover effects into the United States.

Our men and women in uniform encounter danger every day, and they put their lives on the line for our country. The murder of a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement special

agent in Mexico in February 2011 and of a Border Patrol agent in December 2010 underscore the risks our men and women on the frontlines face as they work to protect our borders and our country. As the Director of CNE, I take very seriously my position and responsibility to ensure our law enforcement officers have the resources necessary to carry out their duties in protecting America's borders. We owe them every tool and every resource in our arsenal so that they can safely and successfully do their jobs.

Our partnership with Mexico has been critical to our efforts to secure the Southwest border, and we will continue to expand this collaboration. Mexico's President, Felipe Calderon, has demonstrated a tremendous level of commitment and resolve to breaking the power structure of the transnational criminal organizations operating in his country. Through our attachés in Mexico, the Mérida Initiative and direct, operational cooperation and information sharing, DHS is working to support the Government of Mexico's continuing counternarcotics efforts. As part of a broader bilateral effort, the Department has increased joint training programs with Mexican law enforcement agencies and, for the first time in history, Border Patrol agents are coordinating joint operations along the Southwest border with their colleagues in the Mexican Federal Police to combat human trafficking and smuggling in our respective nations.

I have visited Mexico and have worked with the Government of Mexico to develop the CNE sponsored *U.S.–Mexico Bi-National Criminal Proceeds Study*. The success of this study is the result of the collaborative efforts of CNE, ICE, other federal agencies and the Government of Mexico. This study reveals the means by which criminal networks, particularly drug cartels, move criminal proceeds from the United States into Mexico and beyond. The study includes critical assessments of money collection sites, transportation routes, and chokepoints. It also enables the United States and Mexico to strategically target our law enforcement operations and resources. Its findings are being addressed and implemented by several bi-national planning and strategic working groups. These groups provide a forum for U.S. and Mexican law enforcement to coordinate, de-conflict, and enhance significant criminal investigations. I am encouraged that as our governments expand collaborative efforts, the level of cooperation and information sharing continues to improve.

Our progress in securing the Southwest border against illicit drug trafficking over the past two years is unprecedented and our efforts greatly contributed to protecting the safety and security of individuals and communities along the Southwest border. I am committed to continuing to work with DHS' components and the interagency to ensure that counternarcotics policies and operations are well coordinated and that DHS commits the resources necessary to respond to the evolving threats posed by transnational criminal organizations.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Keating, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I am happy to respond to your questions.